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DEPARTMENT FOR SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/A  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: FRAUD IN ZABUL'S FOOD FOR WORK PROGRAM UNDERMINING  
GOVERNANCE

Classified By: PRT and Sub-National Governance Counselor Valerie C. Fowler, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

#### Summary

11. (C) Corruption and fraud in the U.N. World Food Program's Food For Work (FFW) initiative has started to undermine governance efforts in Zabul province. According to provincial officials, some local government officials are complicit in falsely certifying uncompleted or non-existent projects, and food is not reaching the intended beneficiaries. FFW has given WFP a bad image in Zabul ) an image of an international organization that chiefly enriches those with connections or power, and fuels the popular perception that the GIROA is corrupt and not interested in meeting the basic needs of the people. Embassy Kabul will take the following steps: 1) press the WFP to freeze its FFW program in Zabul until an audit is completed and a new system with stronger oversight can be developed and implemented; and 2) encourage the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the WFP's chief implementing partner, to investigate its Zabul office, and enhance staffing of the office to ensure better oversight and accountability. Until oversight is increased, the U.S. PRT officers judge that FFW will continue to do more harm than good in Zabul.

#### FFW Not Reaching Intended Targets

12. (S/NF) Both Deputy Governor Gulab Shah and Zabul's WFP program manager Bazeed (strictly protect) have told PRT officers on several occasions that few projects are actually being carried out in exchange for the food stuffs provided. Gulab Shah estimated that only 10 percent of the funded projects were actually executed. Bazeed told PRT officers April 5 that he knows that projects are not being done, but the provincial MRRD department and the governor's office sign the paperwork certifying completion of projects. Bazeed said the WFP office in Zabul lacked the ability to verify independently the FFW projects, and thus must accept the paper work submitted by the provincial government. (Comment: The lack of actual work performed explains why more citizens do not complain about the problems with WFP FFW deliveries ) few residents are actually aware they are being cheated out of the potential to be compensated for their labor. End comment)

#### Specific Examples

13. (C) Three recent incidents involving FFW highlight how the program's poor management has started to interfere with basic governance and rule of law:

-- In northern Zabul province, a FFW convoy intended for Dehchopan district was stranded in Arghandab in January when the single dirt road became impassible. The Dehchopan District Chief verbally threatened the PRT officer that if she did not deliver the food to Dehchopan, he would refuse to cooperate with U.S. forces at the outpost in his district, and that they would be "very sorry." The ANA managed to deliver some bags via airlift, but the stalled food and district governor's threats highlighted a complete lack of basic services and governance (as well as a fundamental misunderstanding about the relations between the PRT and WFP programs).

-- In Tarnak wa Jaldak district, south on Highway One from the provincial capital Qalat, the ANP arrested a local education department official and designated district FFW contact, Najibullah, in December 2008 on suspicion of stealing wheat. Najibullah was released at the provincial level (thus disheartening those who tried to prosecute him for theft). Local contacts report that in March, despite receiving FFW shipments, Najibullah had no contracts, no projects, no work, and charged the WFP for 20 employees when he only hired ten. Local villagers ask the police and their USG mentors to take custody of the FFW wheat because they feared that Najibullah, along with District Chief Shodi Khan, would distribute the wheat only to the Popalzai tribe to buy influence. Note: PRT heard numerous allegations of Shodi Khan sells wheat on the market in his home city of Kandahar.

-- Most recently, three well-known local Tukhi tribe

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"troublemakers" blocked a provincial delegation from distributing FFW to villagers from Surkhaghan, a particularly insurgent-prone area. Deputy Provincial Council Chief Assadullah and National Directorate of Security (NDS) chief Nazir Ali reported that three men threw rocks and used abusive language during the incident. The NDS chief claimed later that arresting them would have created bigger problems, and simply stopped the distribution until the new governor could arrive and resolve the situation. In this case, the Surkhaghan elders shrugged and went home, since they had not actually done work for the project. However, the incident highlights how FFW shipments have become commodities in the province's power struggles.

Efforts by Former Governor Arman

14. (C) Former Governor Delbar Jan Arman tried to resolve the WFP FFW problem in November 2008, when he arrested the provincial MRRD Director, a local elder, and several other bureaucrats for "not doing their job and distributing FFW to the people." However, Arman's detractors claimed he wanted more control over the same commodities, and Arman dropped the effort amidst his own political woes. The current MRRD director Mansoor, while not admitting to fraud, did tell the PRT in March that he did not have enough staff to monitor most projects outside Qalat. The PRT communicated these concerns to UNAMA at several points in the last six months, but has seen no response.

Comment

15. (C) At this stage, FFW is counterproductive and no longer reaching its intended beneficiaries in Zabul, nor is it generating the work projects designed for community improvements. Provincial ANA, ANP, and NDS leadership are in agreement that FFW and other humanitarian assistance often ends up in the bazaars. In Zabul, it has become a program that allows those with connections to falsify papers to earn wheat that they can sell or distribute for political influence. In a province where conditions are ripe for the

Taliban to take control of aid shipments in isolated districts, this lack of oversight could eventually fuel the counterinsurgents' efforts to build credibility for their own movement. PRT recommends that the USG convey to MRRD and WFP the immediate need for investigations into the FFW activities in Zabul, and application of stricter controls and monitoring.

16. (U) PRT Commander and USAID field program office coordinated on this report.  
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